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SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY DOBRIANSKY'S MEETING WITH EGYPTIAN
PRIME MINISTER

¶1. (U) Summary. On October 25, Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif met with U/S for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, to discuss the strategic relationship between Egypt and the United States, the significance of Africa in the spread of avian influenza (AI), and the way forward for collaboration on virus sample sharing and vaccine development. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 25, on the margins of the International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Sharm El Sheikh, Prime Minister Nazif met with U/S Dobriansky, accompanied by Amb Margaret Scobey, Amb John Lange, Dr. Kent Hill (USAID) and emboff (notetaker). He thanked U/S Dobriansky for the generous USG bilateral avian influenza assistance to Egypt, totaling \$23 million, which she announced earlier that morning. He also highlighted the importance of the strategic relationship between the two countries as well as the strong trade partnership. U/S Dobriansky noted that the U.S.-Egyptian bilateral relationship would remain strong regardless of the U.S. presidential election outcome, and that it would also endure despite the current economic challenge. Nazif noted that Egypt has never felt that a change in U.S. administrations affected the bilateral relationship in a fundamental way and expressed confidence that the global financial crisis will bring people together to respond in the right way. He stated that while Egypt has not been affected directly by the financial crisis and Egyptian banks have remained intact, the country will ultimately be affected by a slowdown in the U.S., specifically in the export and tourism sectors as well as by decreasing Suez Canal revenues. Nazif added that U.S. elections are coming at a critical time and that the new administration will inherit the positives and negatives of the current administration.

¶3. (SBU) U/S Dobriansky commended Egypt's transparency in providing AI virus samples for the purpose of research and noted the challenge of addressing developing countries, concerns about receiving benefits (such as vaccines) in the event of a pandemic. The UN and WHO have been trying to address that challenge in a balanced way. Minister of Health and Population El Gabaly noted that countries that provide samples, such as Indonesia, are asking for a fair distribution of benefits in return. He stated that there is a line of demarcation between the West and the rest of the world in terms of the West providing technology/research and others providing virus samples. Minister of Agriculture Abaza added that countries are concerned with the lapse in time between providing virus samples and receiving the benefits of a vaccine. While Egypt has worked closely with NAMRU-3 to share information, he understands other countries' reluctance in sharing virus samples. Minister El Gabaly said he would meet with the Indonesians and other countries later that day to begin drafting an agreement of principles and a way to move forward in tackling AI sample and benefit sharing. (Note: after several inconclusive side meetings on

sample/benefit sharing during the conference, the GOE, in the concluding document, Vision for the Future, highlighted the importance of resolving the issue in the December meeting at the World Health Organization. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) The Prime Minister underlined the importance of Africa when addressing AI; Africa is affected but awareness is low and information scarce. He cited Egypt's location on migratory bird routes to and from Africa, noting that it is a continuing cause for concern in Egypt. Minister El Gabaly mentioned Egypt's offer to provide doctors and expertise to Nigeria when they had an AI breakout and his surprise that they did not accept the offer. He noted that African countries focus on malaria and other diseases but do not understand the risk of AI. U/S Dobriansky agreed that Africa is critical and highlighted Egypt's being chosen as host of the Sharm el-Sheikh conference as an indication of Africa's growing importance. She noted the critical work of institutions such as the OIE, WHO, FAO and UN in bolstering networks in Africa, but agreed that more needs to be done. In addition, she stated that religious concerns need to be taken into consideration as well and that Egypt can play a pivotal role in working with Muslim nations in Africa. Minister of Agriculture Abaza agreed and said that increased awareness of AI will lead to fewer outbreaks in Africa. Egypt wants to align its efforts with those of the U.S. in combating AI outbreaks throughout the continent.

¶5. (U) Earlier that day, just prior to the conference, opening session, U/S Dobriansky met with Prime Minister Nazif along with UN System Influenza Coordinator David Nabarro, the Cairo-based European Commission head of delegation, and Amb. Lange (in recognition of the co-sponsors of the conference:

the USG, the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, the UN System and the EC). The Prime Minister said that losses from AI had led the GOE to go to the root cause of the problem and restructure its poultry industry on a non-political basis. U/S Dobriansky noted how important it was that the GOE was hosting this year's international conference to continue high-level focus on the threat from avian and pandemic influenza.

¶6. (U) This cable has been cleared by U/S Dobriansky.
SCOBAY